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**THIRD DEFENDANT PLEADS GUILTY
IN CASE INVOLVING SCHEME TO SELL VISAS**

SACRAMENTO--McGregor W. Scott, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of California, and Christopher A. Wray, Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, announced today that RAMESH KUMAR JAISINGH, 57, of Fairfax, Virginia, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Sacramento to one count of conspiring to defraud the United States, to bribe State Department officials and to commit visa fraud. JAISINGH, who agreed to cooperate with the Government's investigation, was the third defendant to plead guilty in the case. He faces a maximum penalty of up to five years in prison, a three year term of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000. Sentencing is scheduled for February 20, 2004.

Nine other defendants have been charged in an indictment filed May 1, 2003, and in a superseding indictment filed October 2, 2003. Defendants ACEY R. JOHNSON, 32, who was until recently a Consular Associate employed in the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka; his spouse LONG N. LEE, 51, a State Department Foreign Service Officer and career State Department employee; VINESH PRASAD, 33; and MINESH PRADAD, 28, both of Sacramento, are all in federal custody. Defendants NARINDERJIT SINGH BHULLAR, 40, of Sacramento, and PHUONG-HIEN LAM TRINH, 35, of Torrance, California, were previously released on bail. Two defendants, RAJWANT VIRK, 46, of Herndon, Virginia, and RACHHPAL SINGH, 32, of Newark, California, previously entered guilty pleas. A ninth defendant is a fugitive.

According to a complaint unsealed on April 29, 2003, the defendants were allegedly involved in a scheme in which JOHNSON and LEE took hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes between 2000 and 2003 in exchange for the issuance of visas to various foreign nationals, primarily from Vietnam and India. In his plea of guilty, JAISINGH admitted that, starting in at least 1999, co-conspirator VIRK identified Indian nationals who wished to obtain visas to enter the United States and were willing to pay large amounts of money for these visas. VIRK referred these foreign nationals to JAISINGH, who instructed them as to how to proceed and referred them to co-conspirator LEE. LEE arranged to have co-conspirator JOHNSON issue visas for the foreign nationals in exchange for large bribe payments. LEE then instructed

JAISINGH as to how to distribute her and JOHNSON's share of the proceeds from the sale of visas. Following LEE's instructions, JAISINGH and VIRK paid many thousands of dollars in bribes to LEE, JOHNSON, and relatives of LEE.

In addition to a conspiracy charged against all defendants, several of the defendants are charged with wire fraud, bribery, visa fraud, and other felony offenses. The case is being prosecuted in U.S. District Court in Sacramento by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Benjamin B. Wagner and S. Robert Tice-Raskin of the U.S. Attorney's Office, and Trial Attorney Noah D. Bookbinder of the Public Integrity Section, headed by Noel L. Hillman, Chief. The case is the product of an extensive investigation conducted by the Diplomatic Security Service of the U.S. Department of State, and by agents with the FBI and several other state and federal agencies associated with the Joint Terrorism Task Force for the Eastern District of California, including the California Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the Bureau of Immigration Control and Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security. Sri Lankan law enforcement authorities also provided assistance in the investigation.

The United States Attorney's Office noted that the complaint and indictment are only accusations, and that the remaining defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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